Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

O Lord, by all Thy dealings with us, whether of joy or pain, of light or darkness, let us be brought to Thee...that knowing Thy perfectness we may be sure in every disappointment Thou are still loving us, in every darkness Thou art still enlightening us, in every enforced idleness Thou are still using us, and in every death Thou art giving us Life...

— Reformed Church

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OUR PURPOSE

To promote the practice of prayer among ALL religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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The Old and the New

The many visions that seem new today
In years to come are shadows of these times,
And bold ideals that now arrest our thoughts
Will echo low in dim and distant dreams.
Those thorns of prejudice that wound men's souls,
Plaguing their minds with doctrines old and new,
Will fade away as fades the angry storm,
When men with calm content walk wisdom's paths
And know the same bright stars light all their skies.

— Albert Ralph Korn

RELIGION OF TOMORROW

THE ANCIENT DOGMAS no longer dominate the imagination; the shape of life has changed; the patterns of truth are different; the questions have new terms; the doubts have deeper dimensions; the hunger of the heart and mind has been enlarged. The churches of today are addressing themselves, however, in a dead language to situations and issues that no longer exist. If religion is to have any real place in the modern world, it will have to undergo a radical revolution....

Religion which is interested only in itself, in its prestige and success, in its institutions and ecclesiastical niceties is worse than vanity; it is incestuous.

— Dr. Samuel H. Miller
Dean, Harvard Divinity School
In RELIGIOUS DIGEST

EDITORIAL

THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

"Take up thy cross and follow me," says Christ. What does he mean? What is the cross? What is the way of the cross, when applied to the rest of us? Not bereavements, poverty, painful associations, illness, and the like. These are difficult things, we know, but they are not the cross. They are called crosses by many people and we may use that term in the narrow sense, but they are not the real cross. Jacob Boehme, the great 17th century mystic, a man who knew the experience of God directly, asked these same questions and gave us his answer: *"This cross is our nature,"* he said. It is our nature itself—our human nature, our natural condition: not, mind you, the worst part of our nature, but our ordinary human nature as we experience it every day of our lives, in ourselves and with others. That is the cross, that is the enemy. *It is our nature itself that is the cross upon which we are to be crucified.* That is why people will not practice spiritual disciplines. It is in the long and ceaseless attempt to overcome *this* that we grow weary, that we faint, that we labor. "For thy sake," says St. Paul, "we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." This is our cross and we must bear it until, through the power of self-effort and divine grace, we have overcome it, purified it, transcended it, and entered—even in this very life—into the realm of God.

Unfortunately, after we have made a little progress we grow exclusive, we confine God to our own sect, we rear up theologies to take the place of the plain path the prophets laid down for us; we bring some order into our lives after the initial disorder of spiritual awakening and attach ourselves to doctrines, *thinking it is the doctrines that give us our new strength.* Or we slacken our stride, the road seems too long, the cross too heavy, we wonder if it is worth it. Seeking approbation, we lose ourselves in a restless, unthinking humanitarianism—we become doers of good works before any substantial contact has been made with the Divine, and so miss the way. Or,

saddest of all, we pursue the path of the occult and esoteric, flattering ourselves that we have hermetic knowledge too rare for others, following a blind and fear-ridden road that leads nowhere. This is the most deadly escape of all, the subtlest of all attempts to preserve our egoism intact while imagining we are spiritual people.

A little early progress in spiritual life, a little consolidation of our inner forces, and we are ready to do these things. They are all escapes from the burden imposed upon us by the challenges of spiritual unfoldment and the regeneration of our inner Self. They are efforts, in one guise or another, to *resist humility* and strengthen the domain of the ego, to throw off the cross we must bear if we are to attain our spiritual destiny and the perfection which we sense is our real nature. All of them are doomed in the end. Sooner or later, everyone who takes to any of these will have to come back to the main road, to the farthest point he has reached on it, and start again from there.

On this way of the cross, prayer is indispensable. Victory is certain in the end. Like begets like. God is our Creator, we are his children. Hence, we are divine also. In reality we are. If He is perfect, then we are perfect also—as we really are, in spirit, in truth. That is why Christ gave us the command to "become perfect even as your Father is perfect," with the implied suggestion that this could be done. And many have done it. If God is divine, then divinity is our nature also. And this divinity is an absolute, it can never be lost or tarnished. Sooner or later it must be realized, must become known to itself, must be reflected and *experienced by each one of us.* Nothing else will do. That is what religion is about. Thus victory is assured for each of us. No one can be lost. In this one life a man may seem to be lost and indeed may truly be, but he will have to try again, and again, hundreds of times if necessary, until he makes the turn and starts the long way back to the Source whence he came. It is the inevitability of all this that makes the concept of reincarnation so potent and persuasive when we first encounter it.

So in the end each of us will break through one day in-

to full spiritual consciousness, know the Truth, and become free. But on the way, this way of the cross, prayer is indispensable. Often we falter, grow weary, and faint; or resistance cripples us. The burden is never too heavy but often it seems so. We move like sheep to the slaughter. Only a few—a very few—can stand up even then and by sheer power of will throw off their weariness, fear and doubt, manifest their inner strength, and go on. We do not find them often. All the rest of us need prayer. We must pray to Him who has all the power and strength, all the grace, and if we are sincere he will give us all the grace we need. Prayer is our transmission line to Him.

More than that, *it is an end in itself.* It purifies, it strengthens, it regenerates, it cleanses. It enables us to throw off the burden for a while and when we take it up again it is not so heavy—we are stronger as a result. Prayer—deep, fervent inner prayer—brings us close to Him whom we seek, it tames the ego, mortifies our vanity, and at the same time gives us a great sense of expansion and release. It is absolutely necessary at any stage of the spiritual life. Christ prayed, Ramakrishna prayed....

The big brother of prayer is meditation. Here we take hold of the main weapon in religious life to give us the power to check our senses, bring our minds under control, subdue the ego, and lighten the cross. *Meditation is intense thinking of God*—some aspect of God of our own choosing, that which is most congenial to us. It is the gateway to God-realization, the door to complete victory. By meditation alone we can understand everything and attain everything. Many have discovered this. Those who have not are still at the ethical level. Without an ethical life, no doubt, no spirituality is possible. That is true. But it is only the foundation. The world is full of people who think an ethical life is religion, but in times of stress we see what happens to them: they falter and collapse. Beyond ethics—but *after* ethics—comes prayer, and then meditation. These two, and the grace of God that sends a teacher to us, will take us all the way, until we reach the place where we can throw down the cross and find ourselves resurrected from the dead. »»»»

POWER OF THE WORD

How many times in our lives have we wished that we might recall the angry, unkind word which burst from our lips before we thought. And equally as many times has our own stubborn pride kept us from saying the word of forgiveness and understanding when it was needed most.

The power of the word to hurt or heal has been given to man for centuries. But there was also given to man guidance and wisdom in the use of his words, by the master of Galilee, when he taught that the love in man's heart should influence his speech and color his thoughts, making his deeds and actions good.

Not everyone is gifted with a fluent tongue or with the agility of mind even to find meaningful expression when the great need arises. However, it is possible for everyone to be a diplomat in the universal sense, by thinking before speaking even in great emotional stress, and by keeping a stern bridle on the lightning-paced steeds of speech that race before us.

A phrase from the Psalms often runs through my mind when I am sorely tempted to fling my words like arrows into the air." Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to Thee, Oh Lord." How often, by thinking in this way, would we prevent wounding the sensitive soul, and lift the stricken spirit.

The use of the word can be a tremendous power for good, or it can unleash unmeasured evil. We must use these tools of our mind to build life, not tear it down. The simple word of thanks spoken sincerely from a grateful heart can be joyously lifting in turn to the giver. The word of understanding and love is the greatest comfort in the world for the grief-stricken soul. Not long majestic phrases or flowery speeches, but the straightforward sincere communication of one human heart to another.

God gave man the power of speech that he might truly make his way of life here on earth more enriched and beautiful. Let this gift of God be used wisely, that words may become jewels of joy, boundless treasure for the heart of all humanity.

— Zelma Dennis

CHARACTER GARDEN

Janet Hackney

THE SEED CATALOGUES START COMING in this time of the year and the urge to dig in the yard is a constant companion. The bright colors of the illustrations enchant my eyes, the glowing descriptions excite my imagination and, as I read aloud to myself in my solitude by the fireplace, the words roll across my tongue like the flavor of fresh strawberries. The fact that snow is drifting down outside my window matters not at all. That is when I plan and plant my dream gardens. This year I planted a character garden.

The catalogue shows a new improved zinnia of variegated colors like self-respect, which is really the first flower of happiness and has eluded me lately. I weeded out the volunteer seedlings of self-righteousness (and they were abundant). The soil of my mind needed something. It is inclined to pack and drain. I added some patience and tolerance, along with some old-fashioned kindness. Now it turned under my spade of thoughts and was easier to work. If the seeds of faith are not deep-rooted, they are inclined to melt away when the hard spring rains (of doubting) come.

I planted several packages of Humility seeds. It is a favorite with every one, and dainty. It will make a lovely nosegay to wear as a boutonniere. I planted some peace and appreciation beside it.

I RECALLED that I didn't really enjoy that clump of spite and prejudice that grew so wild along the garden path--it crowded out the patience and tolerance by midsummer. I dug it up by the roots and burned it, hoping I had gotten all the nodules.

Next came humor plants. They thrive on sunshine and are so fragrant in a bouquet and balance it, along with some simplicity and duty as border plants and a couple of packages of perseverance in the nook in the rock wall, after digging up the last (I hope) of the procrastination.

Sipping a cup of coffee, I hoped God would like this garden. He planted a garden in Eden and put Adam and Eve

there to tend it. A flower garden, I mused, IS like a mind. We can choose the things that grow in either. God gives us free choice at all times. I wondered if He enjoyed my garden and was more pleased with my thought-life now than He was a year ago? With the use I make of my tongue? Have I weeded out the jealousy, pride, irritation? Was he pleased with how I acted and reacted when I was criticized?

DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER: Teach us how to keep the garden of our hearts ever acceptable to Thee. Amen.

THE OMNIPRESENT GOD—

God is not a continent, like Antarctica, lying off somewhere, inert, without relation to human life till some Scott or Amundsen or Byrd finds him. God is no mountain peak to which travelers must go and which they climb step by step. God is like the air we breathe or the earth beneath our feet. To discover him is simply to awaken to reality. It is like a plant discovering the sun and the rain that drew it from the earth or like children discovering the parents who gave them birth and love and nurture.

— Luther A. Weigle

BREATH OF LIFE

Nothing is stranger than the pumping force
That sends invisible substance in and out
Of precious blood-filled lungs, although of course
It's such a common thing to think about.

We take sweet air, it turns to flesh and bone,
It's coming and its going marks our days—
God breathes the Breath of Life into his own,
And blessed are the ones that know his ways.

The Breath of Life! Inhale it with a prayer
If you would feel God's presence everywhere.

— Bess Foster Smith

ALCOHOLISM--DIVINE MALADY?

In June 1960 we featured an article about the Alcoholics Anonymous movement.* Since then, some additional facts about this remarkable fellowship have come to our attention, which have a pertinent interest for our readers. The implications in these facts are tremendous.

In the first place, AA is a *laymen's movement*. All who have reflected honestly on the status of religion in this age, and the outlines of religion as it emerges for the future, realize that laymen must bear the burden of religion and spiritual advancement henceforth. Alcoholics Anonymous is a dramatic and almost unique demonstration of this truth. Soon after we published our 1960 article, we were informed by someone familiar with its membership and program that today there are *hundreds* of priests and ministers in this organization across the country, all of them recovering alcoholics. Our source was completely trustworthy. The implication is that this fateful illness cannot be arrested by religion alone, or by seclusion, or by medical and psychiatric help; that only by uniting their lives—in humility, on a basis of equality, and with a sense of mutual need—with *laymen* suffering from the same malady, can these clergymen be regenerated.

Secondly, the percentage of success in AA with problem drinkers is estimated at 70%, while all other methods of treatment do not exceed 2%. This extraordinary difference can be explained only by the fact that the AA approach is the *only one where a spiritual program of recovery is offered*, where the individual is expected sooner or later to experience a spiritual awakening, and where God as the Higher Power (as AA calls Him) is frankly placed at the center of the movement. ("For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.") No other approach to this destructive illness does this, and no other, even today, has anything more than a negligible success with the problem.

(The Twelve Suggested Steps of AA, which form the basis of recovery, mention alcohol as such only once. The other eleven steps are concerned with inculcating

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS—A FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER.*

into the sober alcoholic an ethical way of life based on universal spiritual principles. The Eleventh Step reads: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him.*" Moreover, an indispensable part of the AA program is the constant admonition to members, based on the experience of those with a long and unbroken sobriety, to pray to God each morning for help in remaining sober for that one day and, if successful, to thank Him each night. It is pointed out that those who lapse back into compulsive drinking usually do so after neglecting these daily prayers for help.)

Thirdly, Alcoholics Anonymous is truly *non-sectarian.* Its membership is drawn from Protestants, Catholics, Jews and agnostics and, as it is now a world-wide movement, its program is offered to problem drinkers in non-Christian lands. *And yet for all of them it is the same spiritual program.* All are urged to pray to the same Higher Power and all are guided along the same path of regeneration until a spiritual awakening is experienced. In this way the AA members (numbering about 300,000 in this country) are practicing in their fellowship the most fundamental ideals of human brotherhood and have a uniquely dramatic opportunity to discover that the Divine Power presiding over their movement is the same for all, whatever religious affiliation they may profess—the One God of all men everywhere. In the most forceful way possible the AA members come to know this—in the crucible of recovery from a scourge that has wasted millions of lives down the ages.

THE AA PHENOMENON gives rise to other reflections, equally important. If alcoholics are really, *at bottom,* the weak, life-hating, self-centered individuals that they have been described how could large numbers of them, acting together, produce a movement that is probably the most exciting spiritual movement of our time, one that has been called "first century Christianity?" For the AA movement, from all reports, and certainly from the results, is based on service, love, fellowship, understanding, mutual patience, and a central reliance on prayer and meditation to give strength and security to each member. We wonder how it is possible for such vir-

tues to flourish so abundantly in soil that is, allegedly, so opposed to them. In short, how can thousands of neurotic individuals, if they are really such, fashion a movement that is one of the vital spearheads in God's advancing evolution for mankind, in the growth of spiritual truth in our time, in the awakening of the true religious spirit that is coming to pass everywhere?

AA members should consider themselves extremely fortunate, not only because they have found a sober way of life that brings them happiness without alcohol, but because they have been afflicted with a sickness whose recovery *compels them to become spiritual*, to seek God and make contact with Him. Regarded in this light, their affliction is a God-given thing, a *divine malady*, if they could realize the implications of it.

IT SEEMS LIKELY, ALSO, that alcoholics who have broken their compulsion are better able to cope with the problems of life and to understand life than most others because they know how helpless they are without prayer, the grace of God, and the human help and understanding provided by AA itself. Vast forces, within and without, reduce to absurdity the belief of anyone that as an individual he is the master of his destiny, that he can manage his own life on his own power. If anyone believes this, he is still slumbering in the sleep of spiritual ignorance and is living in illusion. Spiritually awakened people know what the truth is, and recovered alcoholics belong in their company. They, as most of us do, have learned the hard way (one of the hardest ways of all) that *God is the only power*, and it is He alone who gives strength, truth, and salvation.

AA members ought to reexamine themselves and the drives that made them alcoholics in the first place—the motives that led them to seek fulfillment in alcohol. What were they seeking when they drank the way they did? Was it not God, after all? Was it not *spiritual experience* — an experience that would take them beyond the sense-consciousness — that they sought, so blindly, without knowing it? And, perhaps, were they not more in need of His presence, love and reality than most people, since in lacking Him they nearly destroyed themselves and, in finding Him,

have produced their miraculous fellowship?

What is at stake at every AA meeting is equivalent to what is at stake every day in the life of the spiritual seeker. The same choice between good and evil, egoism and altruism, God and the self, courage and weakness, fear and hope, love and hate, is involved daily in the life of every genuine spiritual aspirant, and he cannot choose the wrong course without suffering, sometimes grievously. The AA member has all this condensed, at first, in the struggle against the desire for alcohol; later, we are told, this desire is banished and he is faced with the same spiritual battles that face us all. But in the Twelve Suggested Steps of Recovery, and the dynamic interaction of the AA fellowship, he has a program which stretches out—*beyond sobriety*—to endless possibilities of growth, enlightenment and character-purification.

Merely sufficient progress to maintain sobriety and achieve a relative inner security will hardly be enough for most alcoholics, who once went so far down the road of disintegration and chaos. For they are people who embraced a way of life that was extreme and their only hope of real regeneration lies in embracing another that is equally extreme, as opposite to the first as life is to death. For all who wish to embrace it, the AA program is that way of life.

In their upward journey they move, as all do who seek God and the destruction of egoism, *on a path of necessity*. They, as we, have no choice but to go forward. But in the very literal nature of their necessity they have an opportunity to grow in love and spirituality without limit. Great saints became what they were because they, too, were impelled by a driving necessity constantly to surpass themselves and attain perfection. Many of them came from the depths of despair and hopelessness to achieve their stature. In the light of this, no AA member need be ashamed that he is an alcoholic.

ON THE CONTRARY, they can with good reason consider themselves a Chosen People—chosen by God to suffer, to lose the way, to call for help, to be turned again to the light, and chosen by Him to be dependent on His grace for their sobriety, their happiness and their salvation.

— *P.H.*

PRAYER

Mary Baker Eddy

GOD IS LOVE. Can we ask Him to be more? God is intelligence. Can we inform the infinite Mind of anything He does not already comprehend? Do we expect to change perfection? Shall we plead for more at the open fount, which is pouring forth more than we accept?.... Who would stand before a blackboard, and pray the principle of mathematics to solve the problem? The rule is already established, and it is our task to work out the solution. Shall we ask the divine Principle of all goodness to do His own work? His work is done, and we have only to avail ourselves of God's rule in order to receive His blessing, which enables us to work out our own salvation.

The Divine Being must be reflected by man,—else man is not the image and likeness of the patient, tender, and true, the One "altogether lovely"; but to understand God is the work of eternity, and demands absolute consecration of thought, energy, and desire....

Simply asking that we may love God will never make us love Him; but the longing to be better and holier, expressed in daily watchfulness and in striving to assimilate more of the divine character, will mould and fashion us anew, until we awake in His likeness....

Audible prayer can never do the works of spiritual understanding, which regenerates; but silent prayer, watchfulness, and devout obedience enable us to follow Jesus' example....Audible prayer is impressive; it gives momentary solemnity and elevation to thought. But does it produce any lasting benefit?...

PETITIONS BRING TO MORTALS only the results of mortals' own faith. We know that a desire for holiness is requisite in order to gain holiness; but if we desire holiness above all else, we shall sacrifice everything for it. We must be willing to do this, that we may walk securely in the only practical road to holiness. Prayer cannot change the unalterable Truth, nor can prayer alone give us an understanding of Truth; but prayer, coupled with a fervent habitual desire to know and do the will of God, will bring us into all Truth....

— *In* SCIENCE AND HEALTH, *with Key to the Scriptures.*

THE SYMBOL OM

AMONG MILLIONS OF PEOPLE in the Far East the word *OM* (or *AUM*) has a very sacred and special significance which is not too well known nor understood by the Western world. It is their highest and most sacred symbol for God. Why this word has this particular significance is too lengthy to go into here, but thousands of years of spiritual experiment and experience, based on the revelations of ancient sages and seers, have confirmed its efficacy.

There are those today who are seeking to expand their understanding of the symbols and concepts of the great world religions, that they may enter into a greater sense of harmony and unity with the peoples of all the earth. For there can be no real peace in the world until we *can* understand each other, and the great ideas which have so powerfully influenced large segments of people for generations. It is appreciation that is needed, rather than toleration, and this can only come through increasing our own understanding. It is the writer's belief that readers of *FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER* do want to broaden their knowledge of the ideas and ideals that have inspired so many, and therefore may find this brief compilation from one of the Hindu Scriptures of interest.

THE SELECTIONS USED concern this ancient and most sacred symbol, *OM*. They have been taken from the Scripture known as the Upanishads, which are the records of the spiritual revelations of the sages and seers of ancient India. The translation used is that of Swami Prabhavananda, a distinguished interpreter of Hinduism to the West.

"O Lord, Thou has revealed Thy sacred syllable OM, which is one with Thee. In Thy hands it is a weapon with which to destroy all ignorance."

— Svetasvatara Upanishad

"Master, teach me the knowledge of God,-that SUPREME knowledge, hidden and sacred, sought by the wise."

"My son, I will tell you the Word that all the Vedas glorify, all self-sacrifice expresses, all holy life and sacred studies seek. That Word is OM. That Word is the Ever-lasting Spirit. That Word is the high-

est end. When That is known, all longings are fulfilled. It is the surest means. It is the highest help. It is the strongest support."

— Katha Upanishad

"This eternal Word is ALL: what was, what is, and what shall be, and what beyond is in Eternity. All is OM."

"It is the state of supreme consciousness. It is beyond the senses. It is non-duality and love. He goes to the Supreme SELF who knows this!"

— Mandukya Upanishad

"This OM is the great never-born Spirit, a Refuge from all fear. It is the highest support for meditation because it is That which is the Support of all."

"Self-luminous is Brahman, ever-present in the hearts of all. He is the supreme Goal. He is the refuge of all. In Him exists all that moves and breathes. He is Knowledge, Action, Goodness Supreme. He is the Principle of life. Attain Him. O my friend, the one Goal to be attained."

"Within the lotus of the heart He dwells. Meditake upon Him as OM. Easily mayest thou cross the sea of darkness."

"Affix to the Upanishad, the bow incomparable, the sharp arrow of devotion; then with mind absorbed and heart melted in love, draw the arrow and hit the mark — the Imperishable Brahman.

"OM is the bow, the arrow is the individual being, and Brahman (God) is the target. With tranquill heart, take aim. Lose thyself in Him, even as the arrow is lost in the target."

"Upon OM, then, place your meditation. It is your strongest support. And glory to thee in thy journey beyond all darkness!"

— Mundaka Upanishad

From these verses we understand, in some measure, the significance of this unique symbol. To properly meditate upon it, the Scripture tells us, one should be instructed by a qualified spiritual teacher, who is able to impart the true and highest understanding of it to his pupil.

" The syllable OM, when not fully understood, does not lead beyond mortality. When it is fully understood, and meditation rightly directed, a man is freed from all fear... and attains to Brahman, the Immortal, the Imperishable!"

Whether it is possible for us to be instructed by an illumined soul or not, no one can linger over this beautiful and ancient symbol and not feel some response of peace, devotion, a sense of the luminous, or just quiet serenity.

Meditation upon the *OM* is one way toward knowing Him.

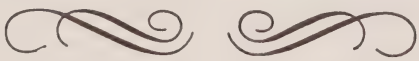
— Helen F. Bridgman

THE UPANISHADS, BREATH OF THE ETERNAL. Published by the Vedanta Press of Hollywood, California and the Mentor Books of the New American Library of World Literature, New York.

INVOCATION

Let space be now circumferenced in love,
Unite the great below, the great above;
Let peace pour from the ever-living sun
While worlds of men become as one, through One.

-- Carla Patsuris



Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

— St. Paul

RAMAKRISHNA: SAINT AND PROPHET

References to Ramakrishna*, the great prophet and God-man of modern India, and quotations from his *Gospel*, have been increasing of late in many places. This is an encouraging sign that people in the West are becoming more receptive to the spiritual truths of the East and to the universal elements that all religions have in common: — which are, in turn, the foundation of the ideal of human brotherhood. A lengthy and illuminating biography of him appears in the latest edition of the *Britannica*, which anyone should consult who is interested in knowing more about this great personality.

Doctrines and theology aside, Christ was the greatest figure recorded in Christian history because of his spiritual attainments and spiritual power. In this sense Ramakrishna may be compared to Christ, as many in the East and West have done, and with good reason: his spirituality was unique and unparalleled, perhaps anywhere, since Christ, and in India since, perhaps, Gautama Buddha. From the standpoint to spiritual grandeur — in all its aspects — these three have been probably the outstanding luminaries of the race for several thousand years. For this reason, vast numbers in India regard Ramakrishna as a divine incarnation, and many in the West have arrived at the same estimate.

Whether he was or not is for each individual to decide after evaluating his life and teachings and the lives of his closest disciples, chief of whom was the famous Swami Vivekananda. At the very least he was the fountainhead of a tremendous wave of spiritual energy that has poured over India in this century and which lay the foundation for the later work of Gandhi. He is also the power behind the widespread re-awakening of Vedanta in many countries of the modern world, a movement which has had much positive, expanding influence in America especially.

Ramakrishna's life extended from 1836 to 1886. He was born in a poor village in rural India, and from his earliest years occupied himself exclusively with the search for God and God-real-

*Not to be confused with S. Radhakrishnan, distinguished Indian philosopher.

ization. The years of his twenties and early thirties were years of intense, almost unbelievable spiritual struggles to attain God-consciousness. Twelve years passed in this manner. At the end of this period a great peace came to him, the peace of self-conquest and complete spiritual realization. Soon after, the first of his extraordinary disciples arrived, whom he developed into great spiritual instruments able to spread his message to all corners of the world. Several of them came to America and England around the turn of the century and Vivekananda himself spent four years in this country.

His message was two-fold: first, God could be known directly by experience, and was to be known, and this experience was attainable even in this life—that, in fact, it was the goal of religion and the purpose of man's life on earth; and second, underlying all religions there is an essential harmony and truth, and each religion, if followed faithfully and with dedication, will bring the aspirant to the same transcendental experience of God.

Ramakrishna was unique among the great prophets in a number of ways. He was the first to test the validity of several major religions by actually becoming an adherent of them. After he had realized the highest God-consciousness through the traditional Hindu disciplines, he became in turn a Moslem, a Christian, and a follower of several of the independent religious sects of India. Each of these paths brought him to the same experience he had achieved originally, so that at the end he was able to say, with conviction, that all religions were divinely inspired, that God was at the heart of each of them, and that each was a path to Him. (It may be noted that one of his most memorable experiences came when the spiritual form of Christ merged in him, raising Ramakrishna to an ecstatic, superconscious state that lasted for three days.)

His fame in both India and the West is increasing, and the influence of his great life is being felt, directly and indirectly, in many quarters of the world. As a sample of the simplicity and power of his words, we offer in the next two pages selections from *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, which is the definitive work encompassing the life and teachings of this new and rising star of humanity.

THE WORDS OF RAMAKRISHNA

"You see many stars at night in the sky but find them not when the sun rises; can you say that there are no stars in the heaven of day? So, O man! because you behold not God in the days of your ignorance, say not that there is no God...

"As one can ascend to the top of a house by means of a ladder or a bamboo or a staircase or a rope, so divers are the ways and means to approach God, and every religion in the world shows one of these ways. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Almighty... I have found that it is the same God toward whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once...

"Wherever I look, I see men quarrelling in the name of religion. But they never reflect that He who is called Krishna is also called Siva, and bears the name of the Primal Energy, Jesus and Allah as well—the same Rama with a thousand names. A lake has several ghats. At one the Hindus take water in pitchers and call it 'jal', at another the Mussalmans take water in leather bags and call it 'pani', at a third the Christians call it 'water'. Can we imagine that it is not 'jal' but only 'pani' or 'water'? How ridiculous! The substance is one under different names, and everyone is seeking the same substance: only climate, temperament and name create differences. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him! He will surely realize Him....

"Really, God can be seen, my boys. As we are sitting and talking together, in the very same way God can be seen and conversed with. Truly and sincerely I say so... The manifestation of the Personal God is often a Spiritual Form, which is seen only by a purified human soul. In other words, these forms of God are realized by the organs of spiritual vision belonging to the spiritual body, which is derived from the Lord...He cannot be seen with the physical eye. In the course of disciplines a special devotion-body is created in you, with eyes and ears of love, and with them you see and hear Him...

"Cry to the Lord with a longing and yearning heart

and you shall see Him. People shed a jugful of tears for the sake of wife and children! They would let themselves be carried away on the stream of their own tears, weeping for the sake of money! But who ever cries for the Lord?.... The rosy light of the dawn comes before the rising sun. Likewise a longing and yearning heart is the sign of the God-vision that is to come...

"First, realize God in the Temple of your heart. To that end you must cleanse it of all impurities, all attachment to this world caused by the sense-organs. One must free oneself of one's sensuous nature in order to realize God...Do you talk of social reforms? Well, you may do so after realizing God. This is the one thing needful. All other things shall be added unto you, if indeed you care to have them...

"Pure selfless knowledge and pure selfless devotion are one and the same thing. The goal is the same. Smooth and easy is the path of devotion leading to God...

"Work without devotion to God has in this age no legs to stand on. It is a foundation of sand. First, cultivate devotion; then work. Work, apart from devotion or love of God, is helpless and cannot stand...Communion with God by means of love, devotion and self-surrender is the law for this present age. It is the easiest of all paths. It brings work to a minimum. It teaches the necessity of prayer without ceasing. It is, in this age, the shortest cut leading to God...

"People do not see the force of habit. If you say eternally, 'I am a sinner, I am a sinner,' you will remain a sinner to the end of the chapter. One who says, 'I am bound, I am bound', will remain in bondage indeed forever. But that man is free who says,'I am free from the bondage of the world, I am free'. Is not the Lord our very own?...

"The Lord manifests Himself, with form or without form, with particular reference to the need of the devotee...

"My son, you must practice a little meditation. Do add to your strength a bit. Go through the devotional exercises a little longer. You have hardly got upon the tree and you expect to lay hold on a cluster of its big fruits!...

— *Selected from* THE GOSPEL OF RAMAKRISHNA

"THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD"

Rev. Roy Wallace Thomas

IN THE SEVENTEENTH century there lived a humble, uneducated monk, Nicholas Herman of Lorraine who, after serving as a soldier, was admitted as a lay brother to the barefooted Carmelites at Paris. He became known as Brother Lawrence.

When eighteen years old, he was converted as the result of the sight in midwinter of a leafless tree, and of the thoughts it stirred concerning the change the coming spring would bring. From that time he tried to walk constantly "as if in God's presence."

He died at the age of eighty, having lived a wholly dedicated life. So impressed by the simple beauty and power of his life, were all who knew him, that he was often questioned concerning his method of arriving at "the habitual sense of God's presence." He wrote that having given himself wholly to God, he renounced everything displeasing to Him. "Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge," whose forgiveness he sought. "At other times I beheld Him in my heart as my Father, as my God."

He sought daily to keep his attention fixed upon God as a living presence, thus causing prayer to become habitual. In this way he mastered the art of living, but he found that, as in all art, perfection of technique cannot be attained without painful effort. Here his good sense took charge.

When he found himself doing well, instead of swelling with pride, he humbly thanked God. When he met with difficulty he refused to be discouraged, and continued his spiritual exercises as if he never had stumbled. "Thus," he wrote, "by rising after my falls, and by frequently renewed acts of faith and love, I am come to a state wherein it would be as difficult for me not to think of God as it was to accustom myself to it."

He called his method *the practice of the presence of God.* "I made this my business as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable

of interrupting my thought of God."

As a cook for the Carmelites, he said, "the time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

Thus his life of prayer cleared his vision and made him master of sacramental living. His religion entered into the whole of his life, causing the commonplace duties of the day to become acts of worship. His practical mysticism *discovered religion as the life of God in the soul of man.* He could see God everywhere, both as Creator of nature and as Father of man's soul.

He earnestly recommended his way of living to others, but his example was a stronger inducement than his words. He knew salvation as complete health of body and soul. Inner conflicts were resolved, fears were banished, and peace, confidence and victory over evil were created. His face revealed such sweetness and calm, and his friendliness to everybody was so inspiring that beholders could not but be affected.

His formula of faith, love and complete consecration to God was well-known to the early Christians, and wherever practised in all the world, as Brother Lawrence practised it, has produced the same results.

To relate the value of his method to our day, we should be impressed by the fact that it was "preventive psychiatry." His praying saved him from worry and anxiety. In our day of stress and strain we are told there are not enough psychiatrists to care for all the mental cases. It is at this point that religion is ofering man's great opportunity.

Our leading psychiatrists agree with Dr. J. A. Hadfield, one of England's greatest: "Speaking as a student of psychotherapy who, as such, has no concern with theology, I am convinced that the Christian religion is one of the most valuable and potent influences for producing that harmony and peace of mind and that confidence of soul which is needed to bring health and power to a large proportion of nervous patients."

H. A. Overstreet, in his *The Mature Mind*, says that in

Brother Lawrence's "unpretentious book, "The Practice of the Presence of God" he meant that "the Life most significant in the universe is present in all places and situations—in the scullery as truly as in the cathedral." This brings to mind the word of another great student of life: Paul Tillich says, "Joy is the ultimate. Eternal joy is the end of the ways of God. *This is the message of all religion: the Kingdom of God is peace and joy.* This is the message of Christianity" (italics mine.) This peace and joy can be known only by the spiritually mature. Brother Lawrence's way of prayer fully matured him.

The key to this maturity is humility,—the way of entrance to all the kingdoms of art, science and religion. We do not mean the fawning attitude often falsely called "great humility." When Jesus pointed to the child as an example of true humility, He was not saying, "Be children." He was saying, "be *like* children." The normal child is eager to learn and to grow. So is the humble man. When he reaches adulthood of body, the real man continues to grow in the priceless richness of increase of wisdom and understanding.

The world of mankind can be guided and saved only by the wisdom and strength of mature men. A prominent psychologist says that half of the people in our nation are arrested emotionally at the child level, hence are not doing their share of the world's work. There was no infantilism in Brother Lawrence's practice of the presence of God. He shrank not from the toil and self-discipline required in mounting the highway to the pinnacle of full manhood, culminating in peace and joy.

He knew what Harry Emerson Fosdick has called "the inner secret of serenity." If all the people of our nation were to practice the presence of God after the manner of Brother Lawrence, multitudes would be saved from the psychiatrists' chairs. Well may the completely mature man rejoice in his attainment of serene confidence, for he is a citizen of the *eternal* kingdom of purpose, value and meaning.

Every noble life leaves the fiber of it interwoven forever in the work of the world.

— Ruskin

VITAL CHRISTIANITY

Mildred Long

WHAT IS VITAL CHRISTIANITY?

To become a Christian, in the vital sense of the term, is to come into contact with God through faith in Christ. I am not referring to intellectual belief. I mean *contact*. The electric current is not turned on till contact is made. And this contact with God produces results, even as the electric current produces light, heat, or power.

When a soul makes this contact with the living God, something happens. He gets a new vision of the love, grace, compassion and sacrifice of God who gave Himself through the death of His son. He gets a new vision of the importance of a man's soul. He gains a new concept of the height to which a human soul can rise when he unites with the divine power. His basic desires and motives are changed. His will is subjected to divine leadership. His whole life and personality are infused with divine life and eternal values. *This* kind of contact, revelation, and commitment is called "conversion."

Following closely on this, in fact, as an immediate and progressive result of this conversion, the man's life is transformed. He is now no longer his own. He is committed to the God-way of life. His will is controlled by God's will and he seeks God's guidance in all matters, small and great. His purpose in life is not for self-satisfaction but to fulfill the divine purpose for him. Progressively his life is purified of human and fleshly desires and filled instead with the thoughts, motives, desires, intents, and pleasures which are rooted and grounded in righteousness, purity, love, and God-likeness.

This kind of transforming process continues till he, like Paul, can say: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Thomas Kelly states it so well: "Practice comes first in religion, not theory or dogma... A practicing Christian must above all be one who practices the return of

the soul to the inner sanctuary, who brings the world into its Light and rejudges it, who brings the Light into the world with all its turmoil and its fitfulness and recreates it." *(Testament of Devotion, p. 35)*

This transforming power is lighted within and operates within the heart and soul of man. This recreates not only the inner man but, as a result of that change, the outer world of circumstances as well. This is vital Christian faith in practice, in action, in living realization. Nothing less than this *is* vital.

A third element in vital Christian living is the prayer life. Without that, Christianity can be neither transforming nor progressive. For prayer is the means by which we make this contact with God. Prayer is communion, a two-way communication with the Divine. Through prayer man enters into personal relationship with God and God enters into man to confer His nature upon him.

Even though the experience of conversion has all the signs of the real thing, if it is not nurtured by prayer and kept alive by this daily vital contact with the Source of all spiritual life, it will become ineffectual. The prayer life is the life-line. It is the fountain of water that never fails and is needed to give nourishment. It is as vital to the Christian as the blood stream is to the life of the body.

A fourth element in vital Christianity is service. This will proceed naturally from the vital contact with God we have mentioned. When the electric wire has made contact with the power house, we see results. The light shines, the heater sends out heat, the radio emits music, the motor runs. So in the spiritual world: the influence of the Christian will be felt. It can in no way be restrained. The life will be pure and righteous. Giving will be in proportion to receiving. Service to all, poor or rich, downcast or discouraged, near or far, will be manifested. Out of hearts that love God supremely and are committed to His way of life will issue such forms of service as could recreate our world. That could not happen if all our so-called Christians were vital Christians!

THE CHALLENGE IS TO MAKE Christianity vital here and now, in this age, in our life-

time. I have not spoken of churches, organizations, forms, or creeds. I have spoken of that which alone changes men and nations—the power of God dwelling in the soul, transforming the soul, motivating life. This power within sheds its reflected rays out into the world where this true Light can put out the darkness and bring in the Kingdom of God on earth.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDES

A troubled woman, a guest in a great hotel, telephoned the office and asked for the manager. When he answered, the distressed lady said: "I want to complain about a terrible noise that upsets me greatly. Someone in the room next to mine has been banging on a piano for several hours. I cannot stand it any longer. If this nuisance continues I shall collapse, and you will be held responsible!"

"I am deeply sorry, madam," replied the manager, "that you are so disturbed. I wish I could help you, but I do not dare do what you request. The pianist you are complaining about is the world-famous musician, Paderewski, and he is now rehearsing for his concert tonight in Symphony Hall!"

"Oh really!" she stammered. "Well, that's different." At once she sent urgent invitations to her friends to gather in her room and listen to the great pianist. Very soon Paderewski had a fascinated audience (in the next room) listening to his marvelous music! And the woman who had first complained about the terrible noise suddenly recovered from her attack of nerves.

It should be noted that in this incident nothing whatever had changed except her attitude. The dictionary defines an attitude as "a state of mind or disposition toward a person or a thing."

— Dr. W. J. Thompson

JONAH AND EVERYMAN

Francis Merchant

JONAH IS THE MAN WHO received an inner command and disobeyed it. A prophet he is, and hence a perceiver of the thread of light that links the inner and the outer. Imperatively the voice within commands that he go to Nineveh—the place of service. He is disinclined to heed the admonition. A thousand reasons come to mind, all persuading him to go to Rome, Cadiz, or Tarshish—anywhere but Nineveh. He remembers all the unpleasant experiences he had at the latter place, magnifying them in the process. The people there are stubborn and obstinate; they have no interest in the pronouncements of a prophet. Surely the inner voice must be mistaken. At last he convinces himself, by tenuously logical reasons, that he should disregard it. Troubled in mind, he boards a boat for the city that is farthest from Nineveh, namely, Tarshish.

No sooner has the vessel put out to sea than a mighty storm arises. The bark is hurled about like a cork, and the mariners are afraid it will founder. Jonah knows that he is responsible for the tempest. When the mariners look at him with suspicious eyes, he confesses his guilt and tells them to cast him overboard. After some hesitation, they follow his advice. No sooner has he been hurled into the seething waters than the storm ceases and the sea becomes calm.

Jonah does not perish, however. He is swallowed by a whale. In the belly of this huge fish, he spends three days. In this darkness, far below the surface of the waters, he wrestles with himself. Justification and reproach are mingled in his thoughts. Intensely the struggle rages. At the end, self-will is conquered, and Jonah is ready to tread the path of service that leads to Nineveh.... No sooner has he come to this decision than the whale spews him forth, and he swims to land.

NOT OF JONAH ALONE is this portentous drama told; it is an incident in the unfoldment of everyman. Conflict lies at the heart of it—conflict that shatters a man's world, hurls him into the lower depths of the sea and holds him captive there until an inner light streams up-

on his wondering eyes and illuminates his surroundings. Two totally different worlds are thus defined: the first, before the plunge; the other, after emerging from the sea. Not the outer world has changed, but he. Disaster, pain and suffering have done their work, preparing him for service.

Self-will, persistent in its obduracy, moves onward through perilous journeyings to an inevitable doom, to chasms of unrelieved darkness. Ruin—seemingly utter and irretrievable—breaks the barriers of adamant that rise like ponderous walls to obscure vision. The labyrinth in which men hide from life must be reduced to rubble. The veils they weave with much show of ingenuity, shutting out the light, must be torn aside. The houses they build to shield themselves from Truth must be thoroughly demolished. The net of words they fashion which the Word cannot penetrate must be burnt away. Destruction is necessary and salutary. Ruin melts with flame the impurities in which the gleaming gold lies concealed. Within the heart of each disaster shines a point of brilliant light....

Upon the road to Nineveh Jonah moves, forgetful of himself and mindful of those who need his aid. Not as a receiver does he go, but as a giver. No longer is his eye fixed exclusively upon himself; his broadening vision includes others; nor does he regard himself as a terminal point, but rather as a transmitting center. The receiver becomes the sharer.

What does he see in Nineveh? He listens to a thousand follies and does not stop his ears; he sees the slime of countless crimes and does not close his eyes. Beyond all this, he perceives a distant glory emerging from present pain. Losing sight of self, he toils with undiminished vigor. He becomes a transparency through which the Light may shine.

EVER AND ANON he re-lives the crisis that yielded a major decision. In his mind's eye he sees the tumultuous waves mercilessly battering the ship. At that fateful moment, all seemed lost, but this was but a seeming. Ruin, he reminds himself, is the tension that brings with it the revelation of the Real.

In THE COMMON GOOD (condensed)

The View of Vedanta

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

Swami Ritajananda

WITH A SUBJECT like this, we should first know something about what is good and what is evil. After that alone can we think of going beyond them. According to some interpretations of these two words there can be nothing like "beyond" good and evil. For, to most of us, good is superior to evil and beyond good there is nothing. *Good* for an ordinary person is what is *desirable*, what is pleasant, and what gives happiness. Opposite to this is *bad*. *Good and evil* is an eternal subject for philosophers and teachers of religion, but all their discussions have not brought light to many questions relating to the subject. Every solution given has left some question unanswered.

Normally, we think 'good' is what we always seek. But it is not so. The same object can be good and bad, the same person can be good and bad, and the same event can be good and bad, all depending on many factors. If a father brings gifts the child says father is good, but when he scolds, he is called bad. Hence 'good' is an attitude we may have towards an object in a particular context. So we cannot conclude a thing is good by an individual's opinion.

If we approach this question from the standpoint of ethical principles, we can never get any satisfactory solution, since they are all theories. We call that good which accords with an accepted ethical code. If the ethical code accords with the absolute, then a person who follows such a code is generally considered to be good. So 'good' is related to perfection.

Here we are not thinking of good as godly or divine, which is a far-fetched meaning of the word. Many great theistic writers have pointed this out. There are the words of Christ, who said God alone is good. Man, when he develops ungodly tendencies, like covetousness, envy, pride and wrath, is said to be united with evil. Our concern here is the interpretation according to popular ethical codes. People have always said that certain actions are good and should be done and certain actions are bad and should not be done. You should help the

needy, go to church, give to charity. These are considered to be good actions. Stealing, lying, or hurting others are bad and should not be done.

Questions relating to these actions depend upon what importance we give them. Are we to go round seeking the hungry, the sick, the miserable ones, and serve them, or shall we seek God? According to many people now, we should serve humanity and cease seeking God. There are others who say that evil in this world is a fact. It is there and will be there. You cannot remove evil. You did not create it and hence you have no responsibility to remove it, by hunting for evils and trying to remove them. Suffering is an inevitable factor of this finite life. It cannot be removed. Its existence stems from your own imperfect vision. So there is no need of going out and seeking some means of eradication.

Some believe we should help the world and thereby help the Lord in establishing His Kingdom. But why did God leave evil in this world, if he has created the world? Could he not have removed all evil? So it appears that God is not powerful enough to remove evil or he does not want to.

We can never give any satisfactory reason why we should do good. It is because (1) we like it or (2) people say it is good or (3) we want to be considered good people. Outside of these, there is no visible reason for goodness. It is hard to say that people will do good if these incentives are not there. There will be very, very few who will not perform wrong actions if it is advantageous to them and if there is no police supervision.

People should resent being called good, as we do not want to be praised before ourselves. When Christ was asked about the good deeds one should do to gain the life eternal, he replied: "Why do you ask me about what is good? One alone is good. If you want to get into Life, keep the commandments."

Beyond good and evil, according to Vedanta:—While suffering is welcomed in the struggles of spiritual life and tolerated when it cannot be overcome, it does not mean anything in the highest state of perfection. The saint feels it as if it is a part of the world and part of himself. There is no question whether one should have it or should

not have it. To such people it is of such small significance. They do not give it the importance that we give it. Nor does he feel worried if he fails to do good to others. He does not believe that by taking a few loaves to hungry people he has solved the problem of suffering. This does only a small good. The major good is to help in the development of a strong inner condition wherein the external suffering is not felt.

Hence the Vedantic ideal has not been social service, but help in the development of the inner power, *so that one's reactions to evil is not so violent that it leads to a break-down of the personality*. This is the real service. Who can do it? Those who have themselves gone beyond these reactions. To a person who has lost their son or beloved husband or wife, there is no way of removing their sorrow, since the dead person cannot be brought back to life. The next alternative is showing sympathy. *But better than this is to guide them to a state of mind where even the greatest of sorrows fails to affect them.*

As a matter of fact, evil is of varying degrees and kinds, and there are material needs, intellectual needs and spiritual needs. Material needs can be supplied only by those who have the means. Intellectual needs also are met by people who can give. But in a wide sense, we never remove poverty in the whole world; nor illiteracy. But according to the Hindu view the development of the right spiritual nature is of greater importance than the supply of worldly goods. Hence there has always been the need of perfected saintly teachers who have gone beyond the self-seeking condition, beyond good and evil, who are the real benefactors of the world.

In Heraclitus good and bad are the same thing. God is summer and winter, day and night, war and peace, surfeit and famine. Vedanta does not consider good and evil as two isolated, separate entities. They are closely related to each other. Life is said to have the shadow, death. Wherever there is life, there must be death following it. Wherever there is happiness, there is its shadow, unhappiness. Nobody has experienced unbroken happiness all his life. Nor can he say he enjoyed happiness unless there has been the contrast

of unhappiness, of suffering. They have to go together and this establishes the duality. The same good becomes evil and the same evil becomes good. No division is possible. They are aspects of the same thing in various degrees. The bitter saccharine tastes sweet when diluted. In extreme pain, people feel ecstasy. No one can remove all evil in the world so that good alone remains. It is not like removing the dross from the gold ore.

Good and evil are generally looked at from the plane of the senses. So material goods are believed to be good, giving happiness. Their absence is evil, leading to suffering. But when our joy in the intellect increases, even a life in a garret and the simplest fare will not make one unhappy. Many intellectuals had very few necessities of life, thereby proving that good and evil, as related to the sense plane, are arbitrary distinctions. Man's enjoyment and suffering are closely related. By increasing one, we shall be increasing the other as well. Those who can laugh can also cry with the same intensity.

Vedanta considers that good and evil belong to the world, but the spirit is not of the world. It is beyond. In the spirit there is neither good nor bad. Good and bad, and all the pairs of opposites, do not enter into it. It is free and perfect. Good and bad both influence a man and disturb his judgment. To understand the world, to work and live properly in the world, is possible only when we go beyond both of these. Good and bad are laws and regulations of the world, but they do not and should not govern the spirit. Rules belong to Nature, the Spirit is beyond Nature. With the discovery of one's spiritual nature in all its vastness, Nature itself seems so small and how much smaller still should be its good and evil. Then both are welcome and do not hurt the sage.

It is not our point here to discuss the problem of good and evil as a social question, not even as a question for an organized religion. It is taken purely from an individual point of view: how shall x or y overcome these opposing forces? *What should be the attitude and what is the goal of an individual in a world where there is a mixture of good and evil?* It is a personal question. Vedanta tries to answer it and tells us, "You must go

to a state beyond these opposing forces and it is possible for you to reach that state." We cannot solve this conflict between good and evil in the field they function in. One has to go beyond them, to a state where the apparent conflict does not exist, or presents a different appearance from a new field of vision.

How to go beyond good and evil: It can be done by study, observance and discrimination, or by acts of love. All these are means for transcending this dual throng. Not to give a violent reaction to evil is considered a discipline. Hence the teaching, "Love thy enemy." While hatred is symbolic of the enemy, it should produce hatred. But one is asked to go to the point of transcending hate by love. In the Bhagavad Gita we read the description of a man of steadfast wisdom and, at the same time, a great lover of God.

Going beyond good and evil does not mean that a person runs away from life. For both of these are not only outside forces, they are within us also.

Ramakrishna said that a man who realizes God goes beyond good and evil. Brahman is beyond good and evil. Brahman is infinite. It is beyond the finite world. Good and evil belong to the finite world only. Hence they cannot reach the Infinite: the Spirit. He (the realized man) is not bound to follow rules, since he will follow rules spontaneously. For him, virtuous actions are not planned but are instinctive. The perfect dancer does not make a false step.

By the realization of God one transcends his body and mind. He is free from ego. Whatever he performs is a divine action. God works through him. Hence he does not consider whether he is doing good or evil. He is beyond them both.

EVIL, GOOD, BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL—are three steps. One has to conquer evil by good. But good is not the end. One should go beyond that. Good is still a bondage, though it is the bondage of a rope. It is good to replace the iron chains by ropes, for ropes can be cut easily and one can gain freedom. But that has to be overcome. In the Spirit there is no such distinction. The spirit is ever free. Good and evil are like insignificant pebbles. Their value is nothing compared to the value of the Spirit.

Film Review

KING OF KINGS, the story of Jesus; produced by Samuel Bronston; 3hrs.

One of the most interesting film epics of recent years is KING OF KINGS, which is outstanding for its ingenicus and convincing presentation of the story of Judas. His motives, which led him to history's most notorious act of betrayal, are seen for the first time as plausible, which is indeed a notable achievement.

Judas was picked by Christ, out of thousands, to be one of his twelve disciples. Hence the spirit of God must have been on him, he must have been a potential saint from the beginning. If it was the Divine Will that led him to betray the Master he would have had to do it for reasons that were powerfully convincing to him as a man of God, for after three years with Jesus he was surely that. KING OF KINGS takes this position and from beginning to end makes his actions credible. At no time is he presented as an ambitious and sinister personality.

Other disciples followed Christ because of his love and the truth of his teaching, but Judas here is drawn to him by his supernatural powers. One of Judas' friends was Barabbas, who is depicted as the underground leader of Jewish rebels plotting to overthrow the yoke of Rome. Judas, in sympathy with him and his cause, promises him that in the hour of crisis Jesus would again demonstrate his divine powers. "When he feels the Roman daggers at his throat," he says exultantly, "with a wave of his hand he will call down the heavenly host and destroy his captors." He is absolutely convinced that Jesus will not submit to imprisonment and crucifixion but will resist and so enable all the Jewish rebels to join hands in one great movement and sweep away the power of Rome and Herod alike. He resolves to betray him to bring on the crisis— "I will force his hand," he says. Barabbas agrees to wait until Jesus comes to Jerusalem before calling for his revolt.

But Jesus drinks the cup to the bitter end. Judas, stupefied and incredulous, watches him as he carries the cross to Calvary. He cannot believe his eyes. He cannot understand why Jesus submits. When he goes out and hangs himself from a tree, it is Barabbas who cuts him down.

— *P.H.*

NOTICES and COMMENTS

WORLD RELIGIONS. In this issue we resume our practice of presenting aspects of the various non-Christian faiths, which has been part of our program from the beginning. On pages 13-19 we have included articles which offer insights into the Hindu religion, especially the Vedanta philosophy that is its foundation. And beginning on page 28 Swami Ritajananda offers a thought-provoking, Vedantic interpretation of the theme, *Beyond Good and Evil....THE GOSPEL OF RAMAKRISHNA,* from which we have drawn selections, can be obtained from the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 17 East 94th Street, New York City, or at any of the Vedanta Centers in this country. It is published in two editions at $5 and $10.

NEW FELLOWSHIP ADVISOR. One of our most faithful subscribers and supporters for many years, Mrs. W. T. Breckenridge of New London, N. H. and Winter Park, Fla., has been named a Fellowship in Prayer Advisor. Mrs. Breckenridge has been with us since 1950 and over the years has proved to be a stimulating and congenial friend. We have no doubt that she will provide us with good counsel and understanding cooperation for a long time to come.

NEW CONTRIBUTING EDITOR. One of our regular and highly gifted writers, whose name is familiar to FIP readers, has accepted our invitation to become a Contributing Editor. He is Dr. Francis Merchant, who is represented in this issue, on page 20, with his splendid and provocative treatment of the Jonah story, *Jonah and Everyman,* selected from the latest issue of *THE COMMON GOOD,* which he edits and publishes at 1017 5th Street, Las Vegas, New Mexico. Dr. Merchant is an experienced writer and teacher and his name appears in many religious and metaphysical publications throughout the world. One of his finest works is *THE GOLDEN HOARD,* which we reviewed in our August 1960 issue and from which we shall print excerpts from time to time. We are indeed privileged to add Dr. Merchant's name to our list of Contributing Editors.

RELIGIOUS DIGEST. A publication probably unsurpassed in

the field of spiritual thought, *RELIGIOUS DIGEST*, has generously reprinted our August 1961 editorial, *A Time for Greatness*, in their latest issue and in the issue previous to that kindly wrote some favorable comments on our work and program. We are very grateful. In turn we can only recommend, in the highest terms, *RELIGIOUS DIGEST* itself, which is edited and published by K. Ramachandra at Jayanthipura, Talangama, Ceylon, and describes itself as "an international journal, devoted to the teachings of prophets, sages and saints of East and West." Each issue seems inspired. We hope many of our readers will seek out this publication for their own benefit... Dr. Samuel H. Miller's forceful statement on *The Religion of Tomorrow*, appearing on the first page, appeared in *RELIGIOUS DIGEST* some months ago.

CONTRIBUTORS. We are grateful to the Christian Science Committee on Publication for granting us permission to print on page 12 excerpts from Mary Baker Eddy's chapter on Prayer, in her *SCIENCE AND HEALTH WITH KEY TO THE SCRIPTURES*.... Albert Ralph Korn was a well-known American poet, residing in New York, who died in 1960. His *The Old and the New*, printed on the first page, was kindly sent to us by Mrs. Clara U. Samuels, of Newark, N. J. .... The prayer on the front page of this issue was selected from the Liturgy of the Reformed Church in America.

FIP BOARD MEETING. The annual meeting of the Board of Trustees of Fellowship in Prayer took place in New York on February 7. It was an important meeting this year. We went to press with this number a few days before the meeting but in our April issue we shall report the pertinent results for the benefit of our readers.

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER is published six times a year at the rate of $3.00. Special rates available for extra copies.

WRITERS WELCOME. New writers are always welcome in this publication. We cordially invite well-written manuscripts (including fiction) on any aspect of the spiritual life, preferably those which reflect our statement of purpose printed on the inside front cover.

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The greatest man is he who chooses the right with the most invincible resolution;

Who resists the sorest temptations from within and without;

Who bears the heaviest burden cheerfully;

Who is calmest in storm and most fearless under menaces and discouragement;

Whose reliance on truth, on virtue, and on God is most unfaltering.

— *Seneca*

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